

Beyond the shadow space: architecture as a professional and creative process; during and post-conflict.

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Beyond the shadow space: architecture as a professional and creative process; during and post-conflict

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Introduction

Much has been written about the impact of conflict on the physical nature of cities; most obviously perhaps the damage, destruction, defensive construction and spatial reconfigurations that evolve in times of conflict. Set within the context of Belfast, Northern Ireland, this paper will focus on three areas. First, a closer reading of the long-term physical impact of conflict, in particular, the spatial forms and practices that persist conceptually and culturally, and/or resist re-conceptualisation. Secondly, the effect of conflict on the nature of architectural practice itself, considering whether issues such as appointment and procurement impacted on architectural expectation and the context of operation. Thirdly, the effect of conflict on people, in particular in relation to creativity and hence the psyche of practice itself. This section will also identify the conditions that undermine or support design quality and creativity not only within times of conflict but also as society evolves out of *the shadow space*.¹

Twelve years on from the Peace Agreement,² it may seem remarkable from an external perspective that Northern Ireland still needs to be reflecting on its troubled past. But the immediate post-conflict phase offered the communities of Northern Ireland place and time to experience 'normal life', begin

to reconcile themselves to the hurt they experienced and start to reconfigure their relationships to one another. Indeed, it has often been expressed that probing the issues too much, at too early a phase, might in fact 'Open old wounds without resolving anything' and/or 'Destabilise the already fragile political system.'³ This tendency not to deliberate or be too probing is therefore understandable and might be the reason why, for example, Northern Ireland's first Architecture and Built Environment policy, published in June, 2006, contains only one routine reference to 'the Troubles'.

Clearly, however, there is a time in the development of a healthy, functioning society, when in order effectively to plan its future, it must also carry out a closer reading and deeper understanding of its past. As Maya Angelou puts it, 'History, despite its wrenching pain/ Cannot be un-lived, and if faced/ With courage, need not be lived again.'⁴

Increasingly, those within the creative arts sector and the built environment professions are showing interest in carrying out that closer reading, teasing out issues around conflict. This was led in part by the recent publication of the Troubles Archive by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.⁵ Those involved in the academic or professional development of future generations of architects are also concerned about the relevance of a post-conflict

condition. As a profession, if architects purport to be concerned with context, then the almost tangible socio-political circumstances and legacy of Northern Ireland does inevitably require direct eye contact. This paper therefore aims to bring the relationship between conflict and architectural practice in Northern Ireland into sharp focus, not to constrain or dull creative practice but to heighten its potential.

The Northern Irish context

Conflict manifests itself in many ways: in physical violence, destruction of the built environment, economic fragility, psychological tension and societal segregation. In order to understand how it impacts on the process of architecture, this section will briefly outline the particular ways that conflict is manifested in Northern Ireland.

Conflict, around British Colonialism, has been part of Irish History for centuries, riots and skirmishes occurred over regular periods over short periods of time but no one predicted that the recent form of armed conflict (referred to in this paper as the Troubles⁶) would have been sustained over a thirty-year period, 1966–1996.⁷

During that thirty-year period, riots and intimidation caused mass shifts in urban populations. Areas of working-class housing (particularly in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry) were burned or demolished and streets cleared to create distinct territorial divisions between the opposing communities. The majority of lives were lived in segregated, single-identity communities and conducted within the strict environments of security and surveillance.⁸ This 'governed' pattern was disrupted by unpredictable patterns of targeted and random shootings. Bombing

campaigns occurred at different phases in the 'Troubles', some directed towards police stations, army convoys and outposts; others at buildings associated with governmental activities or at public spaces on 'mainland' Britain (eg, Birmingham, 1974 and Canary Wharf, 1996), intended to incite terror amongst the wider British public.⁹

The destruction of the built environment is perhaps the most blatant sign of conflict, but more insidious was the ever-present threat of violence. Assassinations and 'disappearances' of business men, taxi drivers, mothers and labourers occurred throughout the period of conflict. The number of those killed and injured during the Troubles exceeded 3,600¹⁰ and 40,000 respectively. This translates to approximately one in every two people in Northern Ireland being closely associated with someone who either lost their life or was injured. Such close association did not just impact on the adult population but more importantly on the children; a legacy that is still being played out in the young people, students and professionals of a society emerging from conflict.¹¹

Economically, Northern Ireland's development was profoundly affected. It is estimated that counterterrorism measures cost the UK and Irish governments approximately £285 million per annum, compensation for victims and damage cost £103 million per annum whilst loss of tourism alone to NI cost £400million per annum. In 1993 it was estimated that paramilitary activity cost the governments of the UK and the Republic of Ireland in the region of £2 thousand million.¹² Against that expenditure, the Northern Irish economy was increasingly artificially propped up by public sector investment.

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Twelve years after the peace process officially began, Northern Ireland still has the highest level of public sector employment in the UK (32.0% : 2010 figures).¹³

As we move into a period of public sector cuts there is real concern that the financial investments made available following the Good Friday Agreement to underpin peace initiatives and socio-political shifts, will not be sustained. At the time of the Agreement the focus of the Belfast Regeneration Office was on the commercial city centre.¹⁴ That focus of attention on physical regeneration of the commercial centre remains. However, over the last ten years the indices of deprivation¹⁵ have shown increased levels of deprivation in the surrounding segregated inner-city communities. Many resident in those areas question the extent to which they have benefited from the 'peace dividend'.

There were of course places in Northern Ireland where lives seem to have been relatively unaffected by the conflict. Inevitably, they were the places where the wealthier sections of society lived. As Duncan Morrow (no relation), the Chief Executive of the Community Relations Council in Northern Ireland, candidly expressed it in 2006:

... those with economic wherewithal have subtly withdrawn ourselves and our children from the line of fire, retreating into televised 'curtain-twitching' where we watch, are fascinated by and judge events through the TV but spare ourselves the consequences or change. We collude in the notion that ruthless segregation of the poor is choice, that we have no role in the problem while living in an economy that remains wealthy if you have public sector employment.¹⁶

This 'withdrawal' of the middle classes was also echoed in a report, 'All truth is bitter', following the visit of the Deputy Chairman of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission which identified 'the apathy and denial of the many', concluding that 'In the development of truth that is accepted on all sides as the truth, the apathy of the better-off must be addressed'.

This 'better-off' societal group includes architects. They did not just 'withdraw' physically into the leafy suburbs; their intellectual, moral and political capacity to inform and influence was similarly withdrawn. As a consequence, the middle class is not the 'political class' in Northern Ireland.¹⁷ Genuinely fearing that their involvement would result in reprisals or increased risk,¹⁸ the coping strategy of most middle-class people in Northern Ireland is reflected in Neil Hannon's lyrics in the song 'Sunrise', '... I kept my head down and carried on'.¹⁹

The physical effects of conflict on form and space

Conflict is not only manifest in the destruction of the Built Environment but also in the building of monolithic watchtowers, fortified police stations, and the territorial tagging of space. Painted kerbstones, flags and murals mark out the sectarian divides. Such physical manifestations of conflict are well documented and understood.²⁰ In addition, the 'peace walls' that separate the communities of Belfast continue a legacy of walls that evoke Belfast's irrevocable past. The lines of barricades erected in the 1880s²¹ during times of sectarian violence are even today circumscribed by 'peace walls' and interface zones designed to keep communities

apart. Paradoxically, despite the Peace Process, Belfast has seen an increase in the number (and the height) of these 'peace walls' from twenty-nine in 1994 to eighty-eight in 2009.²² The walls, and the resulting maps of green and orange neighbourhoods, initially identified by security personnel, demonstrably illustrate the physical divisions in Belfast, offering a 'real' map of the tensions that continue to exist.

In addition to the brutally built objects, the sectarian urban décor and the peace walls, there is a less-overt series of socio-spatial consequences that became concretised through conflict. These are spatial forms and practices that, to some extent, persist conceptually and culturally, and seem to resist re-conceptualisation.

Responding in particular to the city-centre cycle of bombing and re-building, a conservative language of architecture emerged. Buildings turned inwards and façades became 'controlled'; sculpted to resist and able to shut down at the first sign of trouble. Glazing was laminated, frames thickened and shutters expressed. Belfast's streets lost their *ad hoc*, casual embrace of former days and became instead the equivalent of an architectural hard-shoulder. The process of adjusting this language has been slow to change, clients remain wary of lightweight, transparent alternatives, although there are some notable exceptions.²³

Pre-Troubles, Belfast's streets were a weft and warp of connectedness²⁴ for citizens wishing to traverse the city. Neighbourhoods were distinct yet permeable. During the troubles, however, this flow between neighbourhoods calcified. New housing developments and streets on either side of interface

zones were designed to avoid direct contact. The deliberate dead-end and looped-back street structure has resulted not only in a condition where the physical and social interconnections of the city can only be reinstated with the greatest of difficulty, but also in a state of mind, evoked by Carson's (1989) phrase 'a mental block of dog-leg turns and cul-de-sacs'.²⁵

Whilst the peace walls provide ready-made similes of segregation, the voids in the city are equally as prevalent and pervasive. Voids made up of empty plots where development was hoped for but never delivered; tracts of land where large-scale infrastructure was planned but never funded. Some voids were 'cultivated' by the neighbouring communities, creating clear lines of sight 'to view the enemy' or simply to put distance between them and us. Others, however, are just cavities in the city's built fabric; rotten abandoned spaces unfit for investment. As Feldman (1991) states, 'The urban violence in transforming the public sphere of urban social life accelerated the post industrial wasteland.'²⁶

The Forum for Alternative Belfast, an architecture activist group based in Belfast has illustrated²⁷ the disproportionate amount of vacant land in and around Belfast's city centre. Whilst space is an ingredient of urban design, it is also the creative construct that shapes our experience of architecture and permits participative communication and exchange. But these are not passive voids waiting to be creatively filled; these are expansive screaming, violent voids. Large advertising hoardings add some urban structure to their empty corners, but in so doing they also add indiscriminate visual weight to the overwhelmingly negative mass of the voids

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themselves. Designing sensitive, thoughtful architecture and places for such sites is a challenge even for the best of architects.

Whether the long-term response of architects to these challenges is simply to react against this context, that is, to create buildings of glass and tear down the peace walls, remains to be seen. But, as other cities that have lived through multiple conflicts have shown us, progression can sometimes mean transforming the perception of place more than its physical nature. A prime example exists in Berlin where a building designed to house Goering's Air Force Ministry (The Luftwaffe), was later used by the ruling communist party of the German Democratic Republic to house its Ministries,²⁸ before finally becoming the headquarters of the *Treuhand*, the agency tasked with privatising the Socialist State's holdings. This illustrates that even the most radical edges of politics (fascism, communism and capitalism) can re-appropriate and re-use the same spaces through a shift in perception.

A more worrying response to years of under-development is Northern Ireland's deep-rooted concern that investors and developers will go elsewhere if there is too much resistance to development or indeed insistence on quality. Amongst the architectural community it is felt that this insecurity has already led to the approval of developments that showed little regard for the existing built fabric or societal structures. This condition is echoed in Schnieder and Susser's²⁹ observation of the regeneration of 'wounded cities' around the globe, that '...reclamation processes can themselves have destructive spin-offs.'

The affects of conflict on practice

This section of the paper examines the way in which seemingly logical policy governing the appointment of architects and other quality-driven industry initiatives have led to a degradation, at worst, and a conformity, at best, of architectural practice. This in turn has undermined the delivery of quality design outcomes and the ability of architectural practice to respond to highly sensitive localised conditions in the post-conflict context.

Northern Ireland is a small place. Many contractors are small in scale and many design profession companies are equally small. Prior to the recession the local architectural profession had approximately 272 practices, 85% of which had less than 10 members of staff.³⁰ All these companies and practices have built their businesses on the strength of the relationships with clients, professionals and contractors, and a local network of business, community and professional contacts. In the boom period of social housing projects (late 1970s and 1980s) developed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, they employed a call-off list of architects and other design professionals who worked or were located in particular geographical areas and who had demonstrated, or evidenced, competent skills and delivery of social housing schemes ranging from new-build to refurbishment and maintenance projects. The net result of such a procurement system was that architects, and others, from Derry to Donaghadee and from Enniskillen to East Belfast were all treated and valued equally and were certain that they would be afforded an opportunity for design and building projects.

During the period of conflict, significant numbers of architects served their communities and interest sectors by offering their time and skills *pro bono* to projects, including community co-operatives ranging from knitting factories and picture framers in Ballymurphy, West Belfast, to community businesses and church groups in South and East Belfast.

On the negative side, architectural offices and projects were more often than not divided along sectarian lines. Catholic practices designed Catholic churches and schools and Protestant practices designed Protestant churches and schools. Discrimination in the work place was inevitably addressed through Fair Employment Acts in 1976 and 1989; however, new methods of appointments were increasingly developed to ensure non-discriminatory practices with more emphasis placed on objective appointment criteria, rather than trust and local reputation: the local wealth of experience and skill is thus in danger of being lost to current society.

The Northern Ireland Government Central Procurement Directorate and the Department of Finance and Personnel suggested (whilst launching the Draft Policy on Architecture in 2004) that part of the reason for the shift in procurement practices (from traditional open competitive tendering to framework structures whereby tenderers would be limited to four in number to 'improve efficiencies') occurred because the architectural profession in Northern Ireland, had a fractured service base and was too small to deliver the work that must be undertaken to meet the programme for government. The statement echoed an earlier UK construction industry report (Latham, 1994). Where the

inefficiencies identified pointed to the need for greater partnering collaboration and reform in the Construction sector. Subsequent initiatives such as the Egan report of 1998, 'Re-thinking construction', the 'Construction Best Practice Programme', 'The Movement for Innovation' and 'Constructing Excellence', were all designed to drive the industry, as a whole, forward.

But such UK-wide initiatives neither acknowledge the sensitivities of context nor the range of scale and experience needed at a local level. And by ignoring 'quality' indicators in the appointment of architectural practices and placing emphasis on being able to handle large-scale projects, this drive to be impartial and efficient has resulted in the exclusion of small and local architecture practices. The consequence is manifold. First, there is little active support for capacity building in the local profession so it continues to struggle to 'catch up' to government appointment processes. Secondly, young professionals with ambition to work on larger projects leave Northern Ireland, taking their intellectual capital elsewhere. And thirdly, the wealth of experience offered by many small practices and builders is not fully availed of by government as appropriate social and cultural currency in the building of a stronger civic society.

The affects of conflict on people

It is possible to look critically at the physical effects of conflict on the built environment and on the coralling of architectural practice into operational modes that are unsympathetic to the specific societal context. However, when the effect of conflict on people themselves is considered it becomes

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less evidenced. This section will, nevertheless, attempt to take a side-ways glance at this issue, beginning first with an examination of the psychological context in which most practice during the troubles occurred, followed by an assessment of indicators that seem to illustrate low levels of societal creativity and ending with an identification of the elements that sustain creative practice.

Racketeering and the associated elements of harassment and threats were standard fare in the construction industry during the Troubles. The extortion of building contractors became one of the chief ways for paramilitaries to fund-raise (Silke, 1998³¹). Building sites were soft targets for on-site harassment and highly vulnerable to sabotage and vandalism. Building contractors and site personnel were the first point of contact for those who wished to exert control, influence or malicious intervention. Contractors contributed, 'donated' or were forced to pay out substantial sums of money for 'site protection', and were, at times, forced to engage casual unskilled labourers in many areas of the city as local paramilitaries and armed groups flexed their muscles and asserted control over their particular territories.

Such harassment, abuse and threatening actions had the effect of increasing tender price returns on projects as contractors sought to ensure that the losses would not be theirs alone but borne or shared by their clients. What became an almost standard practice of pricing returns and of threatening on-site behaviour was, of course, extended by individuals who seized the opportunity of private gain to build personal fiefdoms that have only

now been dismantled many years into the peace process.

Contractors who worked for the security forces were the most vulnerable, with many injured, threatened or murdered for their 'collaboration'. The construction industry as a whole suffered the loss of skilled personnel.

Many individuals, including architects, have specific and personal stories that recount the actions and antics of racketeers, on-site harassment and theft of site materials. Many witnessed the effects of intimidation on fellow construction workers. And some were sufficiently threatened to alter their daily routines or increase their levels of personal security. But all held those local construction personnel who endured the brunt of the troubles in the highest regard.

Aside from the visible degradation of space, the physical threats and loss of life, there is growing evidence that the conflict and the associated levels of segregation that persist in the community have considerable and long-term consequences for the psychological wellbeing of Northern Irish society.³²

How the conflict impacted on creativity is one area that so far has received less attention. The poet Gerald Dawe draws a link between the physical and the psychic dimensions of Belfast, both in respect to the damage done to them and the need for their 'renovation'. He states, 'For generations Belfast has been viewed in various intellectual and artistic circles as anathema to the creative spirit.'³³ Perhaps stemming from similar concerns, some government policy generated in the last twelve years provides some evidence that conflict is implicitly

understood to have impacted on the degree and nature of creativity in Northern Irish Society.

One indication is that Northern Ireland has some of the lowest levels of entrepreneurial activity in the UK, with graduates less likely than elsewhere in the UK to be involved in early-stage entrepreneurial activity. In 2007 the level of entrepreneurial activity in Northern Ireland was 50 per cent of that in the US and 60 per cent of that in Ireland.³⁴ Part of this may be due to an economy, and hence a culture, that relies heavily on public funding but it is speculated that a root problem lies with the low levels of confidence and ambition that reside in the society as a whole.

Other indicators exist in relation to child development and, in particular, children's play. Play is recognised as an essential developmental component in the lives of all children, yet the negative long-term impact of conflict on play has only recently started to be observed with the realisation that 'children's reactions to violence may be visible in their feelings and play behaviours long after reaching a place of safety' (Hyder, 2005, p. 59³⁵). In response to the growing body of evidence around play deprivation due to the years of conflict, a leading Northern Irish Children's organisation, Derry Children's Commission, launched an innovative Play Strategy³⁶ to address the phenomenon.

Play is the place where people begin to develop their creativity and if play has been affected it is natural to assume that development of creativity has also been affected. During periods of threat or violence, creativity typically manifests itself in less visible and more transient forms of self-expression. Northern Ireland has a reputation for having

world-class poets, playwrights and musicians. Such forms of creativity are transient, non-locatable and more-or-less self-reliant. These manifestations of creativity adapt to the terrain, going underground when required or claiming political and financial patronage where conditions support this. Creativity in this form can be tucked under the arm as the instigator hastily exits the backdoor; out-smarting, exposing and indeed, frustrating conflict.

On the other hand, the act of making space, place and architecture is contentious from the start. In a highly territorialised society the act of building is both intimidatory and vulnerable to intimidation. Architecture and Urban Design are traditionally understood as complex, multi-agency, large-scale processes aimed at achieving long-term investment for future generations. Sadly, environments of quality become difficult to attain in a context of latent destruction and where each generation was focused chiefly on the shorter cycles of day-to-day living.

To move beyond these societal tendencies, even in a period of peace, still requires enormous effort and encouragement. De Bono³⁷ suggested that, in order to transcend situations where blame is apportioned or where argument, negotiation or analysis are focused on the past, we need to think more in 'design mode' and imagine what might be created. Indeed creativity may help to lead Northern Irish society on from conflict.

There have been significant policy responses to a perceived creative deficit. A series of cross-departmental policy documents entitled 'Unlocking Creativity'³⁸ were developed following the peace agreement. The mission of the Unlocking Creativity

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Initiative was to 'develop the capacities of all our people for creativity and innovation, and so promote and sustain the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of Northern Ireland'. The documents, whilst acknowledging Northern Ireland's troubled past, did not, however, directly address the impact of conflict on the societal levels of creativity. Measuring the outcomes of such policy, therefore, is almost impossible when that initial base line is so little understood.

Creative practices, however, give society the space to ask questions, challenge perceptions and rethink accepted positions, not only in relation to the world around us but also to the individual worlds within us. Learning how to turn an idea or feeling into something visible or audible, and hence able to be shared and discussed amongst others, also brings about development and transformation in skills and knowledge. At the heart of all creative practice is the ongoing transformation of creative practitioners and those who participate in and/or witness that process. In the context of community arts and creativity, The Arts Council of Northern Ireland acknowledges this trait: 'It harnesses the transformative power of original artistic expression to produce a range of social, cultural and environmental outcomes' and 'Community Arts transforms both individuals and communities.'³⁹

It is also widely acknowledged that transformation often happens at the point when the practitioner faces the greatest challenge, and indeed creative practitioners frequently seek out problems or limitations to induce a heightened creative response. In other words, difficulty, challenges and

conflict are naturally at the heart of creative processes.

There is, however, some debate around the concept of 'transformation', particularly in the context of community development in Northern Ireland. People question why they need to be 'transformed' and express concerns that creative projects may be used as a subtle form of social and political manipulation. However, the type of transformation that people experience through a creative process is highly individual, often accompanied by growth in self-identity and a wish to be heard. This is a process more akin to self-politicisation and empowerment, and hence unlikely to be susceptible to external or state manipulation. Transformation can be as simple as connecting people to their stories and their voice. It can also transform how they view their place and give them confidence to affect positive change: to overcome, as creative practitioners do, difficult challenges by using innovative, proactive and self determined means. In such a context creativity is understood as 'a process that recognises and accepts challenges, with a confidence borne out of skills, knowledge and reflection, that results in a transformative outcome.'⁴⁰

However, creativity requires a conducive context and as Shirlow and Murtagh⁴¹ point out 'this is not merely a society condemned by a complex history of irresolvable differences, but a place within which the imagination needed to move forward lacks a platform on which to develop'. It is important therefore to understand the elements that contribute most to sustaining creative practices. These can be defined as Confidence, Voice, Vision

and Debate. During the Troubles it was difficult to build *Confidence* and offer positive outcomes when the dominant forces were destructive. There is an urgency now to increase societal confidence, even in the face of recession; reconnecting the pragmatic nature for which Northern Irish society is famed to a new source of confidence and ambition.

To give voice to opinions during times of conflict is complex, not just because it tended to be immediately polarised within sectarian agendas and hence inherently risky; but also because the nature of Direct Rule⁴² seemed to remove the ear on which the voice relied. Hence the populace was, for all intents and purposes, de-politicised and ineffectualised. In the new context of self-government,⁴³ it is hoped that the people of Northern Ireland can reclaim their voice and ability to express their views on change.

Vision relies on optimism and a belief that things can be better. Whilst hope always exists in the darkest of times, during the Troubles it was often the hope of survival or a return to the 'good old days' that pervaded, rather than hope for a better future. The act of looking 'beyond' the present to other places and futures must again become an act of learning and reinvestment rather than escapism.

During a period of conflict the energy needed for collective creative *debate* was diminished by the emigration of talented designers and architects who struggled to find work in Northern Ireland. Not only did they physically leave but their dialogical presence and critical mass were removed from any debates that were emerging. In the face of recession, and increased levels of unemployment,

Northern Ireland is again faced with the loss of young professionals and local knowledge. Investing in people is possibly one of the greatest challenges facing Northern Ireland today.

Conclusion

This paper set out to chart the impact of conflict on architecture as a professional and creative process. Not only in respect to some of the obvious and less obvious physical impacts on the built environment but also on the professional context for architectural practice, and more particularly on the conditions for creative practice itself. In doing so it has found that the Troubles offered a challenging economic context, even for the best of architects, with resources often redirected from the provision of well-designed environments, to more 'pressing' needs. In that context, spatial practices and patterns emerged that are still residual in today's urban landscape. The need radically to re-conceptualise the spatial consequences of elements such as the peace walls and 'screaming voids' is imperative yet challenging. There is little doubt that over the course of the Troubles the psyche of practice itself has been put under stress yet little has been done to address that condition and support the profession. Instead external constraints put on architectural practice have undermined architects' ability to grow fruitful working relationships and local knowledge in order to deliver quality. In this sense the contribution that professional practice can make to the growth of cultural capital, localised economies and the peace process itself has not been understood.

Developing the conditions for creative architectural practice is critical to the future of Northern

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Ireland. Not only as a means to bring about better-quality environments for people to live and work in but also as a means to transform conflict and hence a post-conflict society. Architects have a key role to play and some essential steps to take.

First, they must halt their intellectual withdrawal to the suburbs and from the issues. Dovey⁴⁴ calls for architects to 'enter into the difficulty of things, resisting the desire to remain above the fray, the illusion of autonomy.' Impetus for this re-engagement in spatial and social politics requires an honest understanding of where we have come from. When architects consider 'heritage'⁴⁵ it cannot only be in respect to the physical heritage of the built environment but also to the social and cultural heritage of the last forty years. In other words, it remains relevant to discuss the effect of the Troubles on architectural practice.

When Dovey questions what defines a 'liberating architectural practice' he says 'the answer must remain forever in play'. This gives architects an imperative to demonstrate their creativity or as De Bono understands it, the ability to transcend difficult situations through 'design thinking', believing that solutions, as yet unimaginable, do indeed exist. Of all the professions, architects bring a unique understanding of the latent potency and realisable potentials between people and space. Perhaps the next step in this development is understanding the process of architecture (ie, the externalisation and determination of need, aligned to creative, open, negotiated processes that lead towards quality-focused, sustainable solutions) as a powerful tool in trust building. And that in the most territorialised community areas of Belfast the process of

architecture might be more fruitfully applied to the making of temporary spaces than to the construction of permanent buildings. This echoes Charlesworth's thoughts that pilot projects in post-conflict contexts that are modest enough in scale allow collaboration between local architects, residents, planners, policy makers, students, academics, etc.⁴⁶ She contends that such collaborations allow not only for trust and confidence building to occur in sensitive contexts, but also for testing and evaluation of the processes and outcomes and hence a gradual edging forward towards successful long-term working practices.⁴⁷

Carrying out this work in an inclusive and collaborative manner is probably what will distinguish architectural practice in Northern Ireland in the future. Certainly amongst many of those who have practised architecture over the last forty years, there is a profound understanding of the complexity of community context. This, as yet unvalorised, legacy of community engagement is something to celebrate and build on. More than other societies we need to evoke processes that lead to the creation of shared civil spaces. Such spaces allow people to meet, know each other and co-produce new futures and new societal constellations. 'A shared future depends on more than making deals between old enemies. It requires us to make a new relationship where old enemies become partners and friends.'⁴⁸

Drawing attention to the relationship between conflict and architectural practice is not intended to constrain the creative practitioner within a cycle of guilt and flagellation, but rather as a means 'to stamp down the floor on which to dance'. Or as

Frank Ormsby says of the poets of Northern Ireland: 'They have borne witness to atrocity but found time also to draw ballerinas, to give stars and horse, pigs and trees the attention and reverence they deserve.'⁴⁹

Acknowledgements

This paper grew from a series of interviews conducted with senior and retired architects who have lived and worked throughout the Troubles. The paper also benefited from the critique and insight of a number of other architects in practice in Northern Ireland, although it is acknowledged that the views expressed only represent those of the authors.

Notes and references

1. The term 'shadow space' is taken from Ciaran Mackel's Troubles Archive Essay for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 'Impact of the conflict on public space and architecture', referring to the sheer physical presence and impact of the peace walls (Belfast, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2009), p. 14.
2. The Peace Agreement, also known as the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement (depending on political position), was signed on 10th April, 1998.
3. McEvoy, K., 'Making Peace with the Past: Options for Truth Recovery regarding the Conflict in and about Northern Ireland' (Belfast, Healing Through Remembering, 2006).
4. Angelou, M., 'On the Pulse of Morning', delivered at the inauguration of President Clinton (1993).
5. The Troubles Archive, a digital archive containing many of the key artistic works that were created against the backdrop of the Northern Ireland Troubles, is based in the Ulster Museum.
6. The 'Troubles' was, and still is, a phrase used by both communities as it represented both the casualness of a 'bit of bother' (an earlier euphemism for the conflict) and a dogged refusal to acknowledge that what was happening on the streets was, or could be classified as, a war. 335
7. The dates and names of the period of ethno-political conflict (or 'the Troubles') are contested.
8. For example:
Bevan, R., *The Destruction of Memory. Architecture at War* (London, Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 168. 340
Bryan, D., 'Belfast: Urban Space, "Policing" and Sectarian Polarisation', in, Schneider, J., Susser, I., eds, *Wounded Cities: Destruction and Reconstruction in a Globalised World* (Oxford, New York, Berg, 2003), pp. 251–269. 345
Murtagh, B., 'Image making versus reality: Ethnic division and planning challenge of Belfast's peace lines', in, Neill, W., Fitzsimons, D., Murtagh, B., eds, *Reimagining the Pariah City, Urban Development in Belfast and Detroit* (Aldershot, Brookfield, USA, Avebury, 1995), pp. 209–230. 350
9. McKittrick, D., McVea, D., *Making sense of the troubles* (Belfast, Blackstaff, 2000).
10. McKittrick, D., Kelters, S., Feeley, B., Thornton, C., *Lost Lives Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Edinburgh, Mainstream, 1999). 355
11. Smyth, M., *Half the Battle: Understanding the impact of the Troubles on children and young people* (Derry/Londonderry, INCORE, 1998).
12. Silke, A., 'In defense of the realm: financing Loyalist terrorism in Northern Ireland: part one: extortion and blackmail', in, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 21, 4 (1998). 360
13. Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey (QES), Supplement, March, 2010; published 16.06.2010 (accessed 10.10. 2010).

14. There were no specific references within the Good Friday Agreement regarding the reconstruction of the built environment.
15. The Noble Indicators, designed for use in Northern Ireland, measure multiple deprivation, employing a matrix of measures to allow comparisons between areas to be made in different ways. See: 'Measures of Deprivation Noble v Robson', research paper 02/02 (Research and Library Service, Northern Ireland Assembly, January, 2002).
16. 'The new common sense? Implementing policy for sharing over separation', Duncan Morrow, Chief Executive, Community Relations Council, CRC Policy Conference, Grosvenor House, Belfast, 27th April, 2006: <http://www.community-relations.org.uk/about-the-council/background-info/brandon-hamber-speech/morrowpolicy>
17. See Chapter 5, 'Coasting in the other City', in, Shirlow, P., and Murtagh, B., *Belfast, Segregation, Violence and the City* (London, Pluto Press, 2006).
18. In the aftermath of Internment in 1971, several academics and professionals publicly declared their opposition to the policy of incarceration without charge and in doing so left themselves vulnerable to both abuse and accusations of association with, in particular, Republican activists. The murders of two solicitors, Pat Finucane and Rosemary Nelson, bear witness to this.
19. Neil Hannon, of Divine Comedy lyrics, in 'Sunrise' from the Album 'Fin de Siècle' (1998). Hannon, whose father was the Bishop of Clougher, was born in Londonderry and grew up in and around Enniskillen. Both towns witnessed some of the worst atrocities of the Troubles.
20. For example:
Bevan, R., *The Destruction* (2006), *op. cit.*
Charlesworth, Esther, *Architects without frontiers : war, reconstruction and design responsibility* (Oxford, Elsevier/Architectural Press, 2006).
- Dovey, Kim, *Framing Places, Mediating power in built form* (London, Routledge, 2008; 2nd edition).
- Jarman, Neil, *Material conflicts: parades and visual displays in Northern Ireland* (Oxford, Berg, 1997).
- Rolston, Bill, *Drawing support 2, Murals of war and peace* (Belfast, Beyond the Pale, 1995).
21. Belfast has been the scene of sectarian divides and riots since the rapid rise in population due to industrialisation: there was '...religious rioting in Belfast ... in 1872, 1884, 1886, 1907, 1909, 1920, 1936, 1964, 1966.', C. Mackel, from 'A potted history of a pocket city' (portion of unpublished MSc Urban Design dissertation, University College, Dublin).
22. Taken from the interview 'Bridge over Troubles water' with Duncan Morrow, Chief Executive of Northern Ireland's Community Relations Council, in the *Guardian* newspaper, 29th July, 2009.
23. A notable example is the award-winning (RIBA, 2005) Falls Leisure Centre by Kennedy Fitzgerald and Associates Architects: a fully glazed façade, transparent at night.
24. Mackel, Ciaran, 'Brownfield sites and Green Space', in *Factotum*, 'Belfast Ordinary' Issue (2007).
25. From Ciaran Carson's poem, 'Queen's Gambit', from 'Belfast Confetti' (Wake Forest University Press, 1989) quoted in Murray, Fearghal, 'Lost Lines, Reflections on Belfast's distorted streetscape through Literature', paper presented at the 6th AHRA Conference, 'FIELD/WORK', 2009.
26. Feldman, A., *Formations of Violence: The narrative of the body and political terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 16.
27. Sterrett, Hackett and Hill, 'Agitating for a design and regeneration agenda in a post-conflict city: the case of Belfast', *The Journal of Architecture*, Volume 16, Number 2 (2011).
28. Balfour, A., *Berlin, The Politics of Order 1737–1989* (New York, Rizzoli, 1990), p.116.

29. Schneider, J., Susser, I., *Wounded cities* (2003), *op. cit.*
30. Survey data from the Royal Society of Ulster Architects.
31. Silke, A., 'In defense of the realm' (1998), *op. cit.*, pp. 331–361; 344.
32. For example:
 1. Chapter 3, 'Impact Of The Northern Ireland Conflict On Health And Well-Being', in, 'Equality And Inequalities In Health And Social Care In Northern Ireland', 2003.
 2. Hamilton, J., Hansson, U., Bell, J., Toucas, S., 'Segregated Lives: Social Division, Sectarianism and Everyday Life in Northern Ireland' (Belfast, Institute for Conflict Research, 2009).
33. Dawe, Gerald, 'The revenges of the heart: Belfast and the poetics of space', in, Allen, Nicolas, and Kelly, Aaron, eds, *The Cities of Belfast* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2003), pp. 199–210.
34. Hart, M., 'GEM UK: Northern Ireland Summary' (Kingston-upon-Thames, Small Business Research Centre, Kingston University, 2007).
35. Hyder, T., *War, Conflict and Play* (Maidenhead, UK, Open University Press, 2005).
36. 'Towards a Child Friendly City', Interagency Play Strategy for Derry City Council Area (2006–2009).
37. De Bono, E., *Conflicts: a better way to resolve them* (London, Harrap, 1985).
38. 'Unlocking Creativity: A Strategy for Development' (2000); 'Unlocking Creativity: Making it Happen' (2001); 'Unlocking Creativity: A Creative Region' (2004) (Belfast, Unlocking Creativity Initiative).
39. 'Art Form and Specialist Area Policy 2007–2012: Community Arts' (Arts Council of Northern Ireland).
40. Morrow, R., Rohr, D. and Mey, K., 'Creative Transformations' (AHRC-funded project: Coleraine, University of Ulster, 2008).
41. Shirlow, P., Murtagh, B., *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City* (London, Pluto Press, 2006).
42. 'Direct Rule': the term for the administration of Northern Ireland directly from Westminster (from 1972). While the electorate of Northern Ireland is represented in the UK Parliament (although Sinn Féin does not participate in the parliamentary decision-making process) there was a sense during periods of Direct Rule that those elected (to local political groups) had little influence on major decisions relating to NI taken by the governing but non-NI-based, political parties.
43. Northern Ireland's Assembly (devolved legislature) was reinstated at the time of the peace agreement in 1998, though at different points during the peace process it has been suspended, most notably between 2002 and 2007.
44. Dovey, K., *Framing Places*, *op. cit.*, p. 218.
45. Heritage is one of the three principles of the Architecture and Built Environment Policy for Northern Ireland. The other two are: Creativity and Innovation, and Sustainability.
46. Charlesworth, E., *Architects without frontiers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 124–127.
47. At the time of writing, one of the authors was engaged in a project on an interface involving both communities, city council representatives, architects, artists, engineers, contractors and students. The project intended to use a low-cost temporary installation as part of the consultative process.
48. Morrow, D., 'Our future together', Community Relations Council Policy Conference, Stormont Hotel, Belfast, 2007.
49. Ormsby, F., 'Poetry and the Conflict in Northern Ireland', a Troubles Archive Essay (Belfast, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2009).